completion of inquiry, functioning of the Human Rights Courts and the role of National Commission vis-a-vis other Commissions/State Commissions.

{c) and (d) On examination of these recommendations, the Government was of the opinion that more experience needed to be gained in the working of the National Human Rights Commission before the actual need for changes are assessed in the carefully worked out provisions of the statute.

Conversion of Wastelands into Agricultural Land

*257. SHRI BARJINDER SINGH HAMDARD:
SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA:

Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that land available for agricultural production in the country at present is less, as compared to the wasteland;

(b) if so, the total areas of wasteland and agricultural land, separately, in the country at the end of 1998-99;

(c) whether Government have fixed any time limit to convert these wastelands into agricultural lands; and

(d) if so, the area of land targeted to be converted as agricultural land and by when?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI SUNDAR LAL PATWA): (a) and (b) As per the latest available Land Use Statistics on "Land Use Classification and Irrigated Area", 1996-97 of the Ministry of Agriculture (Directorate of Economics and Statistics), the extent of agricultural land (net area sown) is 142.85 million ha. The extent of barren land & unculturable and other uncultivated land excluding fallow land is 47.65 million ha. As per the report of National Remote Sensing Agency, (NRSA) Hyderabad on Area Statistics of Land Use/Land Cover generated using remote sensing technique on 1:250,000 scale of mapping, the total extent of Wastelands in the country is 75.55 million ha.

(c) and (d) No time limit has been fixed by the Government to convert wastelands into agricultural land. Wastelands are degraded

lands which can be brought under vegetative cover with reasonable effort and cost, and which are currently under-utilized and deteriorating due to lack of appropriate water and soil management or on account of natural causes. Therefore, agricultural operations are generally not feasible on such lands at the first stage of development. The Department of Land Resources (DoLR) has the mandate to develop wastelands rather than to convert wastelands into agricultural land and it is implementing the following Schemes for development of non-forest wastelands.

(i) Integrated Wasteland Development Programme (IWDP).
(ii) Drought Prone Area Development Programme (DPAP)
(iii) Desert Development Programme (DDP)
(iv) Technology Development, Extension & Training (TDET). (v) Investment Promotional Scheme (IPS), (vi) Grant-in-Aid to Voluntary Agencies (GIA). (vii) Wastelands Development Task Force (WDTF).

Cost Escalation in Hinduja Power Project at Visakhapatnam

*258. Dr. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

(a) the progress of work of Hinduja National Power Corporation coming up at Visakhapatnam;

(b) whether there is cost escalation; and

(c) if so, the steps proposed for early completion of the project?

THE MINISTER OF POWER (SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM): (a) The 1040 MW Visakhapatnam Thermal Power Project in Andhra Pradesh being promoted by M/s Hinduja National Power Corporation Limited (HNPCL) has been accorded techno-economic clearance of Central Electricity Authority (CEA) on July 25, 1996 at an estimated completed cost of US $ 943.75 million + Rs. 1324.993 crores. Project was accorded Counter Guarantee by Government of India on 14.8.1998. The Company is in the final stages of concluding the financing arrangements from Indian Financial Institutions/Banks and off-shore funding agencies. The Company has invested in purchase of land and the Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Contractor has mobilised